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Written Comments
Little Hoover Commission
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Introduction

The immense scale of ecosystem restoration programs often requiring decades to plan and implement present special leadership and governance challenges. Crossing multiple political and regulatory boundaries that encompass vast tracts of land held in public and private ownership, these efforts must be collaborative in nature and demand new approaches. This requires visionary leadership to establish a shared vision, form strong partnerships, and to inspire and lead these programs. Adaptive management to respond to changes over time is needed to include the transition from conceptual plan development to plan implementation.

Background

The restoration of the South Florida ecosystem is being carried out through a combination of federal, state, local and tribal initiatives. Congress established the intergovernmental South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force (Task Force) in 1996 to facilitate the coordination of these initiatives. To assist the Task Force in performing its duties a Working Group and Science Coordination Group have been established

From 1993 to 1996 the Task Force operated as a federal interagency group. In 1994 the Governor's Commission for a Sustainable South Florida was established. It consisted of representatives from government and interests groups and used a bipartisan consensus approach to develop its recommendations. Operating from 1994 until 1999, the Governor's Commission in collaboration with the Task Force created a vision and conceptual plan for restoration. The State of Florida strongly supported this vision and was instrumental in gaining congressional authorization of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) in 2000. The CERP is single largest initiative in the restoration of the South Florida ecosystem.

1a. Your recommendations regarding governance structures that result in a strong partnership between the state and federal governments.

Leaders who are able to inspire people and establish a shared vision create strong partnerships. From 1993 to 2000 a handful of exceptional leaders were able to see beyond the boundaries of their own organizations and create a “culture of restoration” for South Florida characterized by a shared vision, values, and understanding. During this period the conceptual plan for Everglades restoration was developed. The culture provided the context for developing solutions that were implementable and that were ultimately agreed to by the state and federal governments as well as the other parties.

While the exercise of leadership and the establishment of a shared vision results in strong partnerships, the organizational design of the restoration in South Florida and the Task Force can promote partnership by minimizing the natural tension between state and federal governments.

For the Everglades restoration, implementation responsibilities remain with the agencies or entities and are consistent with their existing statutory roles and responsibilities unless otherwise provided for. The intergovernmental Task Force is responsible for the strategic coordination of the projects and programs implemented by the agencies. This clear-cut delineation of responsibilities creates the opportunity for the agencies and the Task Force to add value without duplicating or contradicting each other’s roles.

To guide this approach a federal and a state representative provide leadership to the Task Force. The Chair is a special assistant to the Secretary of the Interior (an assistant secretary level equivalent position) while the Vice Chair is the Secretary of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

1b. Please describe the specific mechanisms used by the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force to foster a strong relationship between the state and federal agencies responsible for implementing the decisions of the task force.

The federal legislation and rulemaking related to CERP formally recognizes the partnership and the 50-50 cost share between the state and federal governments. The President and Governor’s Agreement, for example, recognizes the requirement for

collaborative effort among federal and state partners and spells out the responsibilities of the state and federal governments. Governor Bush recognized the 50-50 partnership between the State of Florida and the federal government in his concurrence statement for the Programmatic Regulations for the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan.

The long-term nature of ecosystem restoration precludes planning and implementation by a single set of leaders and members. In order for each set of successive leaders and members to have context for their decisions the “culture of restoration” must be passed along. Passing a culture forward is a complex and multifaceted process. To support this process, orientation briefings are provided for new members and for parties interested in the restoration effort. Until the new leaders and members are fully versed, the structure and processes of the Task Force and the implementing agencies can help maintain the momentum of restoration during transitions.

To guide the coordination of the various efforts the Task Force has developed a Strategy for restoring the South Florida ecosystem. The Strategy includes a vision, guiding principles and three strategic goals. The strategic goals, along with related subgoals and objectives, provide the framework for the work that must be done.

Collaborative intergovernmental problem solving requires a tremendous investment of time and resources. The Task Force strives to solve problems at the lowest level and with the least number of agencies or interests groups necessary for successful resolution. This problem solving hierarchy helps reduce conflict and ensure the most efficient use of available resources allowing the Task Force to concentrate on the most strategic issues.

At the end of each year the Task Force reassesses the status of its strategic issues and establishes priorities for the following year. The annual priorities and the three strategic goals drive the Task Force agendas and guide the efforts of the Working Group and Science Coordination Group.

2a. Please describe the components of your organization’s relationship with the U.S. Congress. For instance, do you provide periodic briefings in writing or in hearing testimony before a congressional committee?

Congress created the intergovernmental Task Force in 1996 and specified the following duties:

- Coordinate the development of consistent policies, strategies, plans, programs, projects, and priorities for the restoration of the South Florida ecosystem;
- Share information;
- Facilitate the resolution of interagency and intergovernmental conflict;
- Coordinate scientific and other research;
- Provide assistance to members of the Task Force.

To keep Congress informed the Task Force provides specific coordination documents every two years. These documents include a:

- Strategy that outlines how the restoration will occur, identifies the resources needed, establishes responsibility for accomplishing actions and links the strategic goals established by the Task Force to outcome oriented goals;
- Biennial Report that summarize the activities of the Task Force during the reporting period, the plans, policies, strategies, programs and projects planned or implemented for the restoration of the South Florida ecosystem, and progress made toward restoration;
- Plan for Coordinating Science that describes how the Task Force identifies programmatic-level science needs and gaps to facilitate management decisions and coordinates efforts to fill the gaps.

The implementing agencies on the Task Force also have reporting requirements to Congress. For example, the Secretary of the Army and the Secretary of the Interior in consultation with the Task Force provide Congress with a report every five years on the implementation of the CERP. The Secretary of the Army, the Secretary of the Interior and the State of Florida in consultation with the Task Force were directed to establish an independent scientific review panel to review the CERP's progress toward achieving the natural system's restoration goals. The panel is directed to produce a biennial report.

Leaders and staff from the Task Force and its member agencies routinely provide information to the relevant authorizing and appropriating committees and subcommittees and participate in periodic congressional hearings and briefings.

2b. In what ways is the Florida congressional delegation involved in the project?

Leaders and staff of the Task Force and its member agencies routinely provide information to the Florida delegation. The delegation has provided consistent, unanimous, bipartisan support for the restoration projects in South Florida. When CERP was authorized, Governor Bush specifically recognized Congress for its broad bipartisan support of the legislation, especially Florida's congressional delegation.

3a. Please describe the institutional relationship with the Florida Legislature

The Strategy and Biennial Report prepared for Congress are also prepared for the Florida Legislature as well as the Seminole Tribe of Florida and the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida. The President and Governor's Agreement for CERP specifies the use of the planning process to supply information for both federal and state legislative oversight requirements. To complement congressional action the Florida legislature established State laws supporting restoration. For example the legislature authorized the South Florida Water Management District to be the local sponsor for Everglades restoration projects. It also created a funding plan to help implement CERP that committed \$2 billion dollars in state funding for 10 years.

3b. Your recommendations for fostering a productive relationship with state policy-makers.

One of the great challenges of intergovernmental collaboration is sorting through the myriad of laws and policies that each of the members must follow. The amount of jurisdictional wetlands in Florida, for example, differs by almost 2,000,000 acres depending on whether you calculate the boundaries using state or federal law. While all relevant laws must be obeyed, clearly an approach that takes advantage of the relative strengths, minimizes the relative weaknesses, and does not result in the lowest common denominator fosters productive relationships with state policy makers. Developing this type

of approach requires a true understanding of each other's respective laws and policies and a willingness to think beyond a business as usual, single agency (or sovereign) perspective. As a result of this level of understanding the federal legislation authorizing CERP recognized that state law would be followed to assure water for the natural system rather than creating a new federal process.

The ability to successfully adapt and benefit from improved business models or take advantage of new information is critical to sustaining long-term restoration efforts. The State of Florida recently introduced an initiative to expedite components of several initial CERP projects. This approach streamlines the planning and implementation process, accelerates available cash flow, makes use of available land and takes advantage of recognized experts in private industry. The federal partners worked closely with the state to adapt from the original approach and support the initiative. Once this program has been fully implemented and evaluated, relevant lessons learned can be applied to other aspects of the plan.

To simplify coordination with state policy makers the Governor has assigned the Secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection with Florida's Everglades portfolio. The South Florida Water Management District - the watershed based agency responsible for managing water resources in South Florida - also plays a significant policy making role in Everglades restoration. The Secretary is Vice Chair of the Task Force and the Executive Director of the South Florida Water Management District is a member.